



January 21, 2005 E-Update

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AAA Creates Condition Code Webpage with Examples and FAQs

The AAA has created a webpage dedicated to providing members with information on the implementation of the ambulance condition codes. The webpage can be accessed on the AAA website through the "Reimbursement Issues" link under "Industry Issues" on the left hand column of the AAA homepage. The page now contains a list of examples of what codes to use in varying circumstances as well as a list of frequently asked questions that are submitted by AAA members.

If you have a question on condition codes, please submit it to AAA Vice President of Government Affairs Tristan North at tnorth@the-aaa.org. We will either have our panel of experts respond to the question or, if necessary, will forward it to officials at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for a response. The identity of those submitting questions will not be posted on the webpage and questions may be altered for clarification purposes.

Mandatory Electronic Claims

By AAA Medicare Consultant David M. Werfel, Esq.

Effective July 1, 2005, Medicare Carriers and Intermediaries will no longer accept paper claims. This is the result of the Administrative Simplification Compliance Act of 2001. The only exceptions that may apply to you are:

- where there is a payer primary to Medicare.
- if you have less than 25 full time equivalent employees.
- if your claims are part of a Medicare demonstration project and claims can not be submitted electronically.
- claims for mass immunizations, where you use a roster bill.
- services furnished outside the U.S.
- experiencing a disruption in electricity that is out of your control, e.g. as the result of a hurricane, earthquake, etc.
- if you can establish "unusual circumstances", e.g. where your carrier/Intermediary is experiencing a problem; if you submit less than 10 claims per month, on average, to a contractor; or other circumstances outside your control where it would be against

equity and good conscience for CMS to enforce this provision.

You will be receiving a notice from your Carrier/Intermediary before July 1, 2005 concerning this requirement. It is suggested that you take all steps necessary, now, to ensure you submit all initial claims, including to Railroad and United Mine Workers, electronically. A copy of the transmittal to Carriers on the matter can be found at: <http://www.the-aaa.org/Publications/E-Update/R435CP.pdf>.

"Error Rate" - Very low for Ambulance

By AAA Medicare Consultant David M. Werfel, Esq.

Each year, CMS determines the error rate for fee for service Medicare payments. They have recently released the error rates for fiscal year 2004. The error rate includes improper coding of claims, services billed that are not medically necessary, insufficient documentation of the services billed, no response to CMS' request for records and other errors.

"Ambulance" was listed 63rd out of the 76 provider groups listed. The error rate for ambulance was only 3.7% which includes 1.0% for non-response, 1.0% for insufficient documentation, 1.3% for medically unnecessary services and 0.3% for incorrect coding. The median was 8.3% for all providers listed.

This is excellent news for the industry as our error rate is extremely low and, therefore, not drawing the attention that invites audits, investigations and legislation. It also enhances the credibility of the American Ambulance Association in the eyes of CMS and others for being able to educate ambulance members as to the correct procedures for billing, coding, coverage requirements, etc.

The list of error rates can be found here: <http://www.the-aaa.org/Publications/E-Update/CERT.doc>.

Submit Examples of Difficulty Experienced in Applying for Homeland Security Funding

On December 8, the New York University (NYU) Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response held a roundtable discussion on "Improving EMS Emergency Preparedness". In follow up to the roundtable, the NYU staff is developing a report on the issue and have asked that we provide them with examples of barriers that ambulance service providers have faced in applying through state and local governments to receive Homeland Security funding. If you have applied for Homeland Security funding and have experienced roadblocks in securing funding, please let us know. Please provide us with the name of your service, location and a description of the barriers you have faced in obtaining funding and any steps you have taken to remove or work through the barriers. Information should be sent to AAA Vice President of Government Affairs Tristan North at tnorth@the-aaa.org. Thank you.

AAA Board Adopts Position Statement on Drug Adulteration

On January 14, the AAA Board of Directors approved a position statement on drug adulteration on ambulances. In October 2004, the U.S. Pharmacopoeia (USP) issued an informational chapter 1070 (Emergency Medical Services and Ambulances---Storage of Preparations). The chapter describes recommendations and calls for more data and research on the stability of the specific medications ambulances carry. The AAA supports this call for more research so that any further recommendations or standards that are developed are based on conclusive scientific peer reviewed research. The AAA, however, does not support more prescriptive standards until the scientific basis is well established specific to the medications ambulances carry. This position can be found in the recently adopted AAA position statement which can be found on the AAA website under "Policy Papers".

AAA Submits Comments on National EMS Scope of Practice Model

The AAA has submitted comments on the National EMS Scope of Practice Model which can be found on the AAA website under "Position

Papers”. According to the website for the Model, “The National EMS Scope of Practice Model is part of an integrated plan to strengthen the infrastructure of EMS education as proposed in the EMS Education Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach, developed in 2000 by NHTSA and HRSA. The National EMS Scope of Practice Model is one essential component in a uniform system of EMS personnel licensing that serves a public need for patient protection as well as a professional need for workforce development and recognition.” We encourage AAA members to visit the website at <http://www.emsscopeofpractice.org>, review the draft Model and use the AAA comments to formulate and submit your own suggestions for changes to the draft. Click on “Feedback” for instructions on how to submit comments. If you do submit a letter, please provide a copy of it to Tristan North at the AAA headquarters.

2005 Winter Healthcare Reimbursement & Professional Education Conference

February 16-19, 2005 - Salt Lake City, UT

**Did you miss the January 7 Audio Conference on
Condition Codes?**

CMS implemented the codes on January 3, of this year with a lot of unanswered questions. Deb Gault, AAA Federal Reimbursement Committee Chair, will deliver the most up to date information from CMS. This is a session that you don't want to miss! Come to Salt Lake City and get the answers to your questions.

**Register NOW! the early-bird ends February 2,
2005. After that date prices INCREASE.**

January 17 Issue of DHS Today

The latest issue of DHS TODAY can be found at:
<http://www.fema.gov/pao/dhs/update-011705.htm>. DHS Today is the weekly publication of the Department of Homeland Security which includes their news, press releases and events.

DHS Issues Initial Schedule of Applicant Workshops for 2005 Fire Grants

Release forwarded from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Please note: In addition to fire-based ambulance services, certain non-profit ambulance services are also eligible for funding under the AFG. For more information, please contact Tristan North at tnorth@the-aaa.org

January 19, 2005 - The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program posted today the initial schedule of applicant workshops for the 2005 Fire Grants. This year, the Congress has appropriated over \$600M specifically for Fire Grants. The application period is tentatively scheduled for March 7 to April 8. Potential applicants and interested parties can view the schedule, as well as other fire grant program information, at <http://www.firegrantsupport.com>. In the coming days and weeks, the AFG Program expects to revise and update the schedule, as new locations are added or currently scheduled workshops are amended. Potential applicants are encouraged to check the AFG website from time to time to verify information in the schedule. Requests for additional workshop locations should be made to one of your AFG regional representatives. Regional contacts and telephone numbers are also available at <http://www.firegrantsupport.com>

The Fire Grants for this year are very similar to those from last year. There is little change. One change is that the Congress has directed the program office to award a limited number of grants (on a competitive basis) to Emergency Medical Service (EMS) organizations that are not affiliated with a fire department.

The AFG program office, in addition to updates of the schedule, plans in the near future to post a copy of the PowerPoint presentation used at the workshops; Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 Program Guidance; frequently asked questions (FAQ's), and; a link to the online tutorial for the FY2005 application. All of these will help an applicant submit a competitive

application for the FY 2005 fire grants. In FY2004, the online tutorial was especially helpful for applicants, and received over 80,000 individual visits.

Questions about the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program may be directed by electronic mail to firegrants@dhs.gov, or you may call the toll free number at 1-866-274-0960.